

Taboga Island Photographs by Ernest “Red” Hallen - Colorized Using Artificial Intelligence

Vivid Stories and Historical Insights: A Panama
Canal Journey Through History (1907–1937)

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DEDICATION

To my dear friend, Jorge de la Guardia - whose heart and soul have long been entwined with the eternal charm of Taboga Island. Through your countless journeys and quiet devotion, you have become its faithful guardian, keeper of its stories and spirit. This book is affectionately dedicated to you.

PREFACE

Three years have passed since the first edition of *Taboga Island – Photographs by Ernest “Red” Hallen: Tales and Historical Information* was published. Printed entirely in black and white, the original book sought to preserve and share the timeless charm of this beloved island through the lens of one of the Panama Canal’s most remarkable photographers.

In this new edition, the written narratives remain large as they were—each story still honoring the people, traditions, and historical essence of Taboga Island. The original text has been carefully reviewed with the support of artificial intelligence (AI), while ensuring that its historical voice and intent remain intact. What has changed, however, is the way we see the island. The original black-and-white photographs have been thoughtfully transformed into color using advanced AI tools. This process, carried out with deep respect for historical accuracy, breathes new life into the images while preserving their authenticity and spirit.

Color has the power to connect past and present, allowing modern readers to experience these scenes as if they were standing on the island themselves, feeling the tropical light and sensing the pulse of its enduring history.

Yet it is important to acknowledge that today’s AI photo-colorization applications, despite their impressive progress, remain far from producing results that can be considered fully reliable or historically precise. Many challenges persist: subtle tones are often misinterpreted, tropical colors may be oversaturated or inaccurately rendered, and fine details can be lost or invented by the algorithm. These limitations are part of an emerging technology still in adolescence. However, I am confident that in the near future, as these tools continue to evolve, they will deliver increasingly refined and trustworthy results, offering even more powerful ways to preserve and re-experience our visual history.

This edition is therefore not a replacement, but a continuation—a bridge between eras, uniting human memory, photography, and technology in the service of historical preservation.

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INTRODUCTION

Ernest “Red” Hallen (1875-1947) was an American photographer, noted for his 30 years of work as the official photographer of the Panama Canal. He was born in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1875. After spending six years in Puerto Rico and two years in Cuba, he was appointed as the official photographer of the Panama Canal by the Isthmian Canal Commission in 1907. Hallen was contracted to capture “... a series of photographs... about once a month... to show construction progress” to satisfy both Washington and the American public. In addition to showing the construction and progress of the Panama Canal, Hallen depicted the day-to-day life of the “Zonians” - Americans living in the Panama Canal Zone - and its development over the course of the years. Throughout his 30-year career, Hallen produced between 12,000 and 16,000 images, each with a “strangely satisfying aesthetic experience” portraying life in the Panama Canal Zone.

For his service to the Panama Canal Zone and as an employee of the Isthmian Canal Commission, Hallen was awarded the Roosevelt Medal with two bars. Hallen retired as the official photographer of the Panama Canal Zone in 1937. He and his wife Maude then moved to Monterey Park, California. Died in 1947 at the age of 72.¹

Hallen's work are the result of a brief memorandum written by F. B. Maltby, Division Engineer of the Isthmian Canal Commission. It is doubtful that he realized the magnitude of this photographic project when he wrote in 1906: "I should like very much to have a series of photographs taken at Gatun about once a month to show the progress of the work. This should be done regularly and will become valuable. I think, in connection with progress reports. I, therefore, request authority for the employment of a photographer, with whom, I understand, arrangements have already been made, not to exceed two days in each month." Subsequently, Hallen was hired as the official photographer and for the next 30 years he went about his duties of recording the progress of the construction and operation of the Canal. His work is particularly remarkable when it is realized that all of these photographs were taken on the old 8x10 glass plates. He is especially to be commended for the high technical quality of his work considering the cumbersome plates, camera, and other equipment he had to carry to the muddy construction sites while coping with tropical rain and high humidity.

¹ Retrieved from Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ernest_Hallen

Hallen attempts to make no personal artistic statements about the Canal but worked at carrying out his assignment-making a documentary record of the construction and later the operation of the waterway. However, the triumphs and setbacks are recorded so proficiently that, on viewing his photographs, one is immediately aware of the immense engineering problems involved in the digging of the Canal. N. F. Karlins, writing in the photography column in the New York East Side Express, said: "Looking at these photographs today, they are compelling statements about the manipulation of rock, sand, and water over time. Hallen's photographs more vividly reveal the immensity of the project and the difficulties involved in constructing the Panama Canal when they focus on one area and are viewed sequentially.

The transformation of the environment becomes a magical process in which mountains are moved and mammoth trenches cut. "Not only does the principal trench, Culebra Cut, appear closer and closer to completion in these photographs, but workers cottages suddenly pop up as if they had blossomed overnight. In the last photo, just as man has succeeded in cutting a huge swath in the earth, nature has succeeded in reclaiming some of her own land by sending up huge palms before the worker's homes. Progress on the excavation is counter-balanced by the growth of natural vegetation, and they are captured together by Hallen's camera. The processes, not just the object involved, are made visible.

Gene Thornton, writing of the exhibit in his column in the New York Times, said: "They are unpretentious record shots but because of the subject matter some of them are quite bizarre. Without looking at the labels, we might suppose they depict the archeological excavation of ancient masonry walls or the construction of a set for a colossal science fiction film. However, every photograph is clearly labeled and dated on the negative itself, so we are never in any real doubt about what we are seeing or about the photographer's intention to show it to us as clearly and truly as possible."

Only a few of the thousands of photographs are reproduced here [219 Series - Taboga Island]. They serve as a reminder that except for "Red" Hallen or some photographer like him to go out every day and simply take pictures, the heroic drama of the building of the Panama Canal could never have been told in such vivid and precise detail.²

² Panama Canal Company. (1976, Winter). Canal's historic photos displayed in New York. *Panama Canal Review*, pp. 17-21.



The Sanitarium on Taboga Island was established by the old French Canal Company in 1885 as a convalescent hospital for the French employees then working on the Isthmus. After the abandonment of active operations on the Canal, the representatives of the French company allowed residents of the Isthmus to use the Sanitarium building as a boarding place for visitors. The attention of the French officials was first called to the salubrity of the island of Taboga by the fact that residents of the Isthmus had for many years visited there and considered it a very agreeable change from the relaxing climate of the mainland. It is a well-known fact that the rainfall at Taboga is only about one-half what it is on the Ancon side of the Isthmus, while conditions show that the atmosphere is at all times very much drier and the climate much more bracing and the climate much more bracing.³

³ Isthmian Canal Commission. (1908, January 15). THE SANITARIUM AT TABOGA. Its History and Uses - Attractions of the Island. *The Canal Record*, 1, p. 155.



219-B. General View of the Village , Taboga Island.

After the transfer of the Canal works to the administration of the United States, one of the first orders given by the hospital division was for the rehabilitation and reorganization of the Sanitarium at Taboga. The work was completed and the Sanitarium re-opened in September 1905. Since that date extensions and improvements have been made to the buildings and grounds. The present normal capacity of the Sanitarium is seventy patients, with an emergency capacity of ninety. The system employed is to transfer the convalescents from Ancon and Colon Hospitals, and when they so desire, and there is accommodation available, to allow their families to accompany them. At times also, employees and their families are sent there on the recommendation of an I. C. C. physician without first entering the hospital. When conditions permit, employees who so desire, are allowed to spend portions of their vacations at the Sanitarium. The same is true of honeymoons.⁴

⁴ Ibid.



219-C Along the Shore at Low Tide, Taboga Island.

The Sanitarium is in charge of a Superintending Physician, three nurses, and a steward, assisted by a staff of colored cooks, attendants and waiters. Patients are transferred to Taboga by the hospital launch which makes tri-weekly trips. On this launch supplies from the Commissary are also shipped. Considerable amounts of milk and fresh fruits are purchased on the island for the use of the institution. *En route* to Taboga, passengers obtain a very good view of Panama City and Ancon, the Pacific entrance to the Canal at La Boca, the leper settlement at Palo Seco, and the islands of Naos, Culebra, Perico and Flamenco. These islands are now the property of the United States and on one of them, Culebra, quarantine headquarters for the Pacific side of the Isthmus will be established. Near the island of Perico may be seen the masts of the ship Lautaro which were set fire to and sunk in January 1902 by the Liberal gunboat Padilla during the last revolution. General Alban, the Colombian military chief of the province of Panama lost his life in this action.⁵

⁵ Ibid.



219-D. In the Road to the Sanitarium, Taboga Island.

Taboga Island is about four miles long and two miles broad and is ten miles from Panama City. On his arrival the visitor is impressed with the extreme clearness of the sea water, the atmosphere, and with the many different shades of green that are to be observed on the sides of the hills. The village of Taboga is ideally located on a horseshoe bay and is said to have been in existence at the same time as Old Panama. In the village there is a small, old Roman Catholic Church that is a point of interest to visitors. The floor of this church is paved with tombstones and memorial stones, many of them bearing dates during the eighteenth century. The sea bathing is very good, especially on the section of beach that forms the bar between Taboga and Morro islands, about half a mile above the village there are also freshwater bathing pools which are supplied by the stream coming down the ravine in the center of the island.⁶

⁶ Ibid.



219-E. Looking towards the Village from the Sanitarium, Taboga Island.

The climb to the top of the hill behind the village is well worth the effort involved. The path follows the stream for about a mile and then branches off through several pineapple and corn patches to the top of the hill, whence a magnificent view of the whole of Panama Bay and the mountains of the Isthmian mainland can be obtained. Plantations of pineapples, oranges, limes, mangoes, mameys, cocoanuts, corn and coffee are tended by the natives. The pineapples of Taboga are famous for their lusciousness. Others of the natives make their living as fishermen and boatmen. Taboga spring water is well known up and down the west coast. The steamship companies running into Panama obtain water there which is used by their boats while on the trip to San Francisco or Valparaiso. The Pacific Steam Navigation Company at one time had machine shops and storehouses on Taboga Island for the purpose of handling repairs and victualling their steamers plying up and down the coast.⁷

⁷ Ibid.



The Steamer Petite Louise carries passengers and supplies from Panama to Taboga, and leaves Panama at an indefinite time and arrives at an indefinite time. It has a schedule but does not seem able to follow it. The causes of delays are numerous. I took the trip with two companions, a lady and gentleman. We were told if we did not get there at a certain time-low tide-the lady would have to be carried, and as she felt afraid to risk the carrying part, we were on time. The tide was out, and we walked fully a half mile over rocky and muddy shore to a small boat and were rowed a mile from there to the Petite Louise lying in the bay. We waited an hour and a half for this relic of the times of the French to start, and at last, loaded down with people and supplies we were off. It was a delightful ride, cool and pleasant. Near Palo Seco the leper supply boat met us and took a small portion of our cargo.⁸

⁸ Graham, G. (1908). *On the Canal One - Panama*. Chicago: The Wagner and Hanson Company, pp. 121-122.



219-G. Native Shacks in the Village, Taboga Island.

The island of Taboga formed a favorite resort. This beautiful island, twelve miles from Panama, looking toward the South Seas, lies in the "open door" to that Pacific wonder world. It has three miles of coastline, and is nearly round, with an elevation of about fifteen hundred feet. The summit is destitute of trees, but is always green, while its lovely slopes and many ravines are clothed with luxuriant tropical verdure. Springs bubble from its rocks, and babble downward to the sea. The hamlet or village is very quaint. It has no regular streets. The houses, which have roofs of tiles or palm-leaf thatch, walls of mud-plastered wild cane, and earth floors, are scattered up and down as though of spontaneous growth, like the jungle by which they are surrounded. They toiled not, neither did they spin on that happy island, but lived in contented idle isolation, without newspaper, steam engine, telegraph, or any other modern invention.⁹

⁹ Robinson, T. (1907). *PANAMA, A personal Record of Forty-six Years, 1861-1907*. New York and Panama: The Star and Herald Company, pp. 118-119.



Of the dozen islands in the Bay of Panama only Taboga is inhabited. It was set aside as the dwelling place of liberated Indian slaves in 1549, and its people, 850 in all, are chiefly the descendants of these lianas mixed with Negroes. The island is an extinct volcano whose steep sides come down to the water's edge, leaving only a little shelf or terrace on which the village stands. The houses are for the great part substantial stone and adobe buildings. There is a church with a bone of a real saint, a school, half a dozen saloons, and half a dozen Chinese shops. Raising pineapples, fishing, and dealing with the convalescents from the Sanitarium are the chief sources of livelihood. The Sanitarium is a large frame building erected by the French as a convalescent hospital and maintained as such by the Americana. There is little rain in Taboga, even in the rainy season, and the cool dry air is very tonic for people from the mainland.¹⁰

¹⁰ Collins, J. O. (1912). *The Panama Guide*. Panamá: Quartermaster's Department, p.149.



219-J. Taboga Island, Native children on steps of a typical house in the Village. 1912.

The difference between Taboga and the mainland is as great as if the island were a thousand miles to sea. The islanders have a much lighter complexion, and many girls have light hair. Some claim that this is due to the fact that for many years Scotchmen lived on the island, in charge of the water tanks at which Pacific liners called. The accompanying photograph of a Taboga belle shows the great variance from the Negro and Indian types. The islanders are very proud of this difference and the greatest compliment that can be paid a girl is to call her a typical "Tabogana". The streets of the little town are narrow and steep, with here and there a sign of the Spanish occupation in short stretches of cobblestone. The houses are substantial, built mostly of some dried mud, and many roofed with corrugated iron. The inhabitants are religious, moral and hardworking. They are chiefly engaged in fishing, when not away on long cruises.¹¹

¹¹ Richardson G. and Slosson, E. (1906, April 12). Taboga and the Chagres River. *The Independent*, p. 862.



Taboga derives its name from the Chief Cacique of the island at the time of its discovery. The island was discovered by Vasco Núñez de Balboa in 1513. The Spaniards took the island after an energetic resistance put up by the Indians, who were commanded by Caciques Taboga, Uraba, Chama, Bona and Otoque. After taking possession of the town, the Spaniards changed its name to that of San Pedro, established their government and started to construct the church, which still stands there, as well as a fort on Morro Point. The cannons of this fort are still kept in the town. In 1671, the pirates, headed by the terrible Morgan, attacked Taboga. Illingworth sacked and burnt the town, including the church, in 1819, before which the fort was taken; and after he had completed his infamous work, he pursued the Spaniards as far as the Loma del Calvario, where the Spaniards, aided by the residents, made a determined resistance, killing three pirates and defeating the rest. Three crosses can still be seen on that site, which mark the graves of the 3 pirates.¹²

¹² Reyes, J. R. (1929). *Taboga: its origin, intellectual and material progress*. Panamá.



A large establishment for repairs and for coaling the steamers had been located at the island of Taboga, in the Bay of Panama, under the management of Mr. Jamieson, who was afterwards employed by the great shipbuilders, Smith and Elder, as chief constructor at their shipyards on the Clyde. I often visited Taboga in those days and was impressed with the magnitude of the operations carried on there. Mr. W. G. Sealy, afterwards agent of the Australian line, was in charge of the office, and good old Dr. McDowell, who subsequently became editor of the Panama Star and Herald, had his residence, as surgeon of the works, in a vine-embowered cottage perched upon the apex of the Morro, overlooking the shops, with wide and lovely vistas of sea and land. Hundreds of men were employed, and a large amount of money was disbursed, a considerable portion of which found its way into the hands of Panama merchants.¹³

¹³ Robinson, Op. cit., pp. 55-56.



At the extreme north there are three crosses. In the early days of Taboga's native dwellers a 'Ship of Fortune' came into port with three leaders on board. After being entertained by the natives, and surprised to find beautiful girls there, they decided to give a grand ball on shipboard, issuing invitations to the effect that the women would be shown on board first, followed by the men. As soon as the last woman came on to the boat the gangway was closed, and they started to sail away. But the natives took their boats and caught the ship before she reached deep water. The women jumped into the water. Determined to have the women the strangers came back to shore and fought; the natives took to the hills, the strangers following. When the crew saw the last leader fall, they took what women they could and sailed away, never to return. The three crosses mark the resting place of the three leaders.¹⁴

¹⁴ Graham, op. cit., pp. 123-124.



There are many legends connected with Taboga, which is said to have been a resort of pirates before the modern city of Panama was founded. One of the stories tells how among the first ships to touch the island one was manned by buccaneers. These men were much impressed by the young women of Taboga, who are to this day noted for their beauty. The pirates announced that on a certain evening they would give a dance on board their vessel, and the islanders were invited. When the time arrived, a pretext was found for taking the women on board before the men. As soon as they were on the deck, the ship attempted to sail and leave with them. Many of the women, however, jumped into the water and swam ashore, whilst the men of the island put off in their canoes and attacked the vessel. At the conclusion of the fight, the pirates got away with a few of the fair Taboga damsels, but they paid for them with the loss of several of their own number.¹⁵

¹⁵ Lindsay, F. (1910). *Panama and the Canal Today* (Fifth ed.). Boston: L. C. Page and Company, p. 311.



Taboga Sanitarium Becomes "Hotel Aspinwall" - Beginning January 16, the Subsistence Department assumed charge and operation of the former sanitarium on Taboga Island and is now conducting it as a public hotel under the name of "Hotel Aspinwall". The rates and rules of the hotel are published among the official circulars in this issue.

Transfer of Vessels in Dredging Service - The seagoing suction dredge Culebra, launch Sanidad, and clapet No. 9, were transferred from the Pacific entrance to Culebra Cut during the forenoon of Tuesday, January 20. On the same date, the launch Louise was transferred from the Cut to the Pacific entrance for general service in Balboa harbor, and in carrying supplies to the Hotel Aspinwall on Taboga Island.¹⁶

¹⁶ Isthmian Canal Commission. (1914, January 21). *The Canal Record*, VII, p. 205.



219-0. Hotel Aspinwall, Taboga Island. Boat landing and protection Wall at High Tide, Jan., 1916.

The following rates and rules for the Hotel Aspinwall are published, effective January 22, 1914. Rates for bed and board: Employees, \$2.25 per day; non-employees, \$3 per day; servants and children under 12 years \$1 per day. The daily bed and board rate will be divided, as follows: Three meals at 50 cents each and bed, 75 cents, for employees; three meals at 50 cents each, and bed, \$1.50, for non-employees; three meals at 25 cents each, and bed, 25 cents, for servants, or for children under 12. People at bed and board rate must pay for all meals unless one day's meals, or more, are missed consecutively, in which case notice must be given to the clerk in advance to secure credit. When stay terminates in the morning, breakfast will be included in bill. An extra charge of 25 cents per person will be made for meals served in room. Nonemployees after staying 30 days, will, for the rest of their stay, be given employees' rate.¹⁷

¹⁷ Wilson, E. T. (1914, January 19). Rates and Rules for Hotel Aspinwall - Taboga Island. *The Canal Record*, VII, p. 211.



Rates for meals: Breakfast, 50 cents; lunch, 75 cents; dinner, \$1. Meal tickets will be purchased at the office before entering dining room by all people without rooms. Charge on supply launch between Balboa and Taboga, one way - Employees, 25 cents; non-employees, 50 cents; children under five years, free. Open accounts will not be permitted. Guests will be required to pay their bills upon leaving. Accounts for employees who are unpaid at time of leaving will be made up at the non-employees' rate and sent to the Examiner of Accounts. Bills will be made up on the 7th, 14th, 21st, and last day of the month, and presented to all guests who have been at the hotel for a week. All bills are due and payable on presentation. No variations from this rule will be made without authority from the Subsistence Officer. No employee of the hotel has authority to make any other rates, or to modify any of the foregoing rules.¹⁸

¹⁸ Ibid.



Employees of the Canal Commission and the Panama railroad who are convalescent from illness may be sent to Hotel Aspinwall, Taboga, under sick leave from Ancon and Colon Hospitals. The number of days spent at the hotel by each employee under such leave is not to exceed the number prescribed by the physician and will be certified by the steward in charge to the hospital sending the patient. The hotel charge for such convalescents will be the regular employees' rate of \$2.25 per day for bed and board. The steam launch Louise leaves the dredge landing at Balboa for Taboga at 9 o'clock in the morning on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays; returning the same day, it leaves Taboga at 2 p. m. The postal address of the Commission hotel on Taboga Island is Hotel Aspinwall, Taboga, Balboa, Canal Zone.¹⁹

¹⁹ Isthmian Canal Commission. (1914, February 18). Sending Convalescents to Taboga Island. *The Canal Record*, p. 247



Hotel Aspinwall Enjoying an Increased Patronage due to Improved Transportation Service. Since the inauguration of the daily launch service to Taboga Island on December 1, there has been a marked increase in the travel in that direction. Especially is this so on Saturdays and Sundays, when employees, and in the case of married men, their families, can go over on Saturday night and stay, if they choose, until Monday morning, or go over on Sunday morning, come back that night, or stay until the following morning. The weekends at the Hotel Aspinwall are becoming more and more popular, and with the appearance of the dry season, it is expected that the number of visitors will still further increase. On Saturday and Sunday, December 12 and 13, there were more guests at the hotel than at any previous time since the special launch service was started. The low rates for transportation and the moderate charges for hotel accommodation, combined with the rest and change afforded by a visit to the island, make the trip unusually attractive.²⁰

²⁰ The Panama Canal. (1914, December 16). Trips to Taboga Island. *The Panama Canal Record*, VIII, p. 163.



To those seeking absolute rest, or to those convalescing from a spell of sickness, the conditions are almost ideal, and this fact is beginning to be realized more and more. In former times, when the hotel was operated as a sanitarium, to those of the patients who liked diversion, the days were a little dull. There was nothing to do but to sit around, read, wait for meal hours, and to go in bathing when the spirit prompted, while one's movements were naturally restricted to a certain extent. The aim of the present management in its plan to popularize the place is to furnish every reasonable comfort and convenience to its guests, and in addition, to provide suitable forms of diversion. To this end, a croquet ground has been laid out, and the construction of a lawn tennis court is under way, which will be available for the holding of tournaments by Canal Zone clubs, as well as for the use of the individual hotel guests. The hotel is already provided with a poolroom, and a piano has recently been installed in the parlor, so that music for dancing is now available.²¹

²¹ Ibid.



219-5² Boy Scouts Outing Taboga April 21-1916

The management is arranging to procure the services of one, who, in addition to performing other duties about the hotel, will be able to play the piano on dance nights. Other forms of diversion will probably be introduced later, including something for the little folks. The rates at the hotel, as compared with other resort hotels, are very reasonable. A special rate has recently been authorized whereby patrons who go over on the afternoon boat can obtain dinner, lodging, and breakfast for \$1.50, and another arrangement has been placed in effect whereby employees can have their bills deducted from their pay at the end of the month, if so desired. The bedrooms at the hotel are airy and clean, and added privacy has been secured by enclosing the veranda space pertaining to each room on the second floor with wire partitions. This permits occupants of various rooms to carry on conversations when seated on the porch but eliminates the constant passing back and forth in front of the rooms.²²

²² Ibid.



The dinner at the hotel on Sunday evening, December 13, as shown by the menu given below, may be considered as typical of the meals now served at the hotel:

MENU

Celery, Pickles, Consommé Royale, Breaded Fish, Tartare Sauce, Julianne Potatoes, Roasted Stuffed Chicken, Duchesse Potatoes, Creamed Carrots, and Asparagus.

TO ORDER

Eggs, Plain Ouellette's and Sirloin Steaks.

COLD

York Ham, Roast Lamb, Papaya Salad, Strawberry Ice Cream and Cakes.

Fruit, Crackers & Cheese, Tea, Coffee and Cocoa.²³

²³ Ibid.



The natural beauty of the island is always a sterling attraction; its quaint village with crooked cobble stone streets perched on the hillside; its sand 'beaches and almost perfect bathing; its fruits, embracing nearly every variety common to the tropic, and particularly its pineapples, known far and wide, which may be seen growing in patches on the steep hill slopes; its tamarind grove, said to be the largest of its kind in the country, located on the beach path to La Restinga, the little suburb to the main village, opposite Morro Island; its pure spring water, and its conch and coral specimens, all afford abundant opportunities for lovers of nature, and for pleasure and curiosity seekers.²⁴

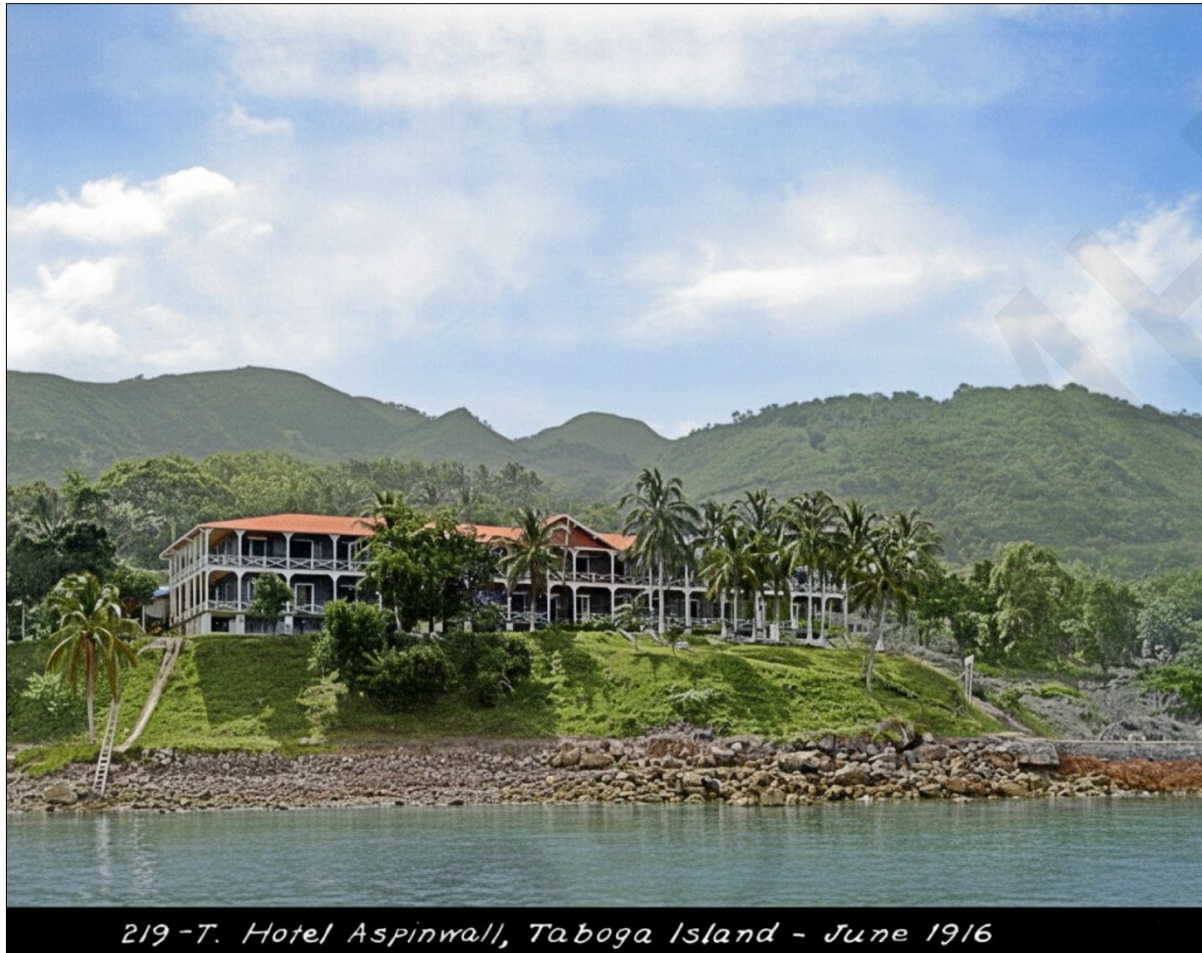
²⁴ Ibid.



219-55 Boy Scouts Outing Taboga - April 21-1916

Effective Tuesday, January 4, 1916, the following will be the fares for the trip, one way, between Balboa and the Hotel Aspinwall at Taboga, for employees of The Panama Canal and the Panama Railroad and members of employees' families: For adults, 30 cents; for children (six to 12 years of age), 20 cents. Children under six years of age will be carried away free. The fares for nonemployees will be double those for employees; that is, 60 cents, one way, for adults and 40 cents for children. Under ordinary conditions the launch goes alongside the landing pier at Taboga. Whenever this is not practicable on account of the roughness of the water or an extremely low tide, the management of the Hotel Aspinwall will furnish panga service, for which no extra charge will be made to the passengers on the launch.²⁵

²⁵ The Panama Canal. (1916, January 5). Taboga Launch Service Rates. *The Panama Canal Record*, IX, p. 169.



Following the placing of the new gasoline launch Taboga in service, the schedule of launch sailings between Balboa and Taboga Island has been revised, effective February 1, and is now as follows: From Taboga - Daily, launch Taboga leaves for Taboga at 9:45 a.m. and at 5:30 p.m. From Taboga - Daily, launch Taboga leaves for Balboa at 10:45 a.m. and at 6:45 p.m. The 10:45 a.m. trip from Taboga may be delayed at times to 2 p.m., under orders given by the Chief Quartermaster, the manager of the Hotel Aspinwall, of the Captain of the Port of Balboa. On Mondays and days following holidays the launch Aspinwall will be used to supplement the regular daily service, leaving the dredge landing for Taboga at 5 a.m., and returning from Taboga at 6.30 a.m.²⁶

²⁶ The Panama Canal. (1916, February 2). New Schedule of Launch Service to Taboga. *The Panama Canal Record*, IX, p. 204.



The name of the launch Taboga, operated by the office of the Captain of the Port of Cristobal, has been changed to Margarita; and the new launch which arrived on the Isthmus on the steamship Cristobal on January 18, under the name of Margarita, has been renamed Taboga. The launches exchanged names because the new one is to be used in the service between Balboa and the Hotel Aspinwall, on Taboga Island, and it was considered appropriate to call it the Taboga. The earlier launch, originally called the Taboga, was purchased last July for this service but turned over to the Port Captain at Cristobal to meet a temporary shortage in launches; and the later launch was sent to the Port Captain at Balboa. The launches are sisters, each capable of carrying 50 passengers.²⁷

²⁷ The Panama Canal. (1916, February 2). Exchange of Names between Launches. *The Panama Canal Record*, IX, p. 204.



219-V TABOGA ISLAND. Native Village and Hotel Aspinwall from the Bay. MAR. 1919.

The Hotel Aspinwall on Taboga Island will be closed at the end of business on June 30 and, according to present plans, will not be reopened until February 1, 1917. It will then be operated during the time that the bulk of annual haves of employees are being spent, as during this period the patronage of the hotel is ample to warrant its operation. In the meantime, a caretaker will be left in charge of the buildings and grounds, and employees whose health demands may, on recommendation of the Chief Health Officer, occupy rooms in the building and carry-on light housekeeping there during the closing period. It is considered that the most important service of the hotel has been in affording an inexpensively accessible place at which employees in poor health may spend short leaves for recuperation.²⁸

²⁸ The Panama Canal. (1916, June 14). CLOSING HOTEL ASPINWALL: Will Be Closed from July 1 to February 1 - Open to Visitors and Convalescents. *The Panama Canal Record*, IX, p. 368.



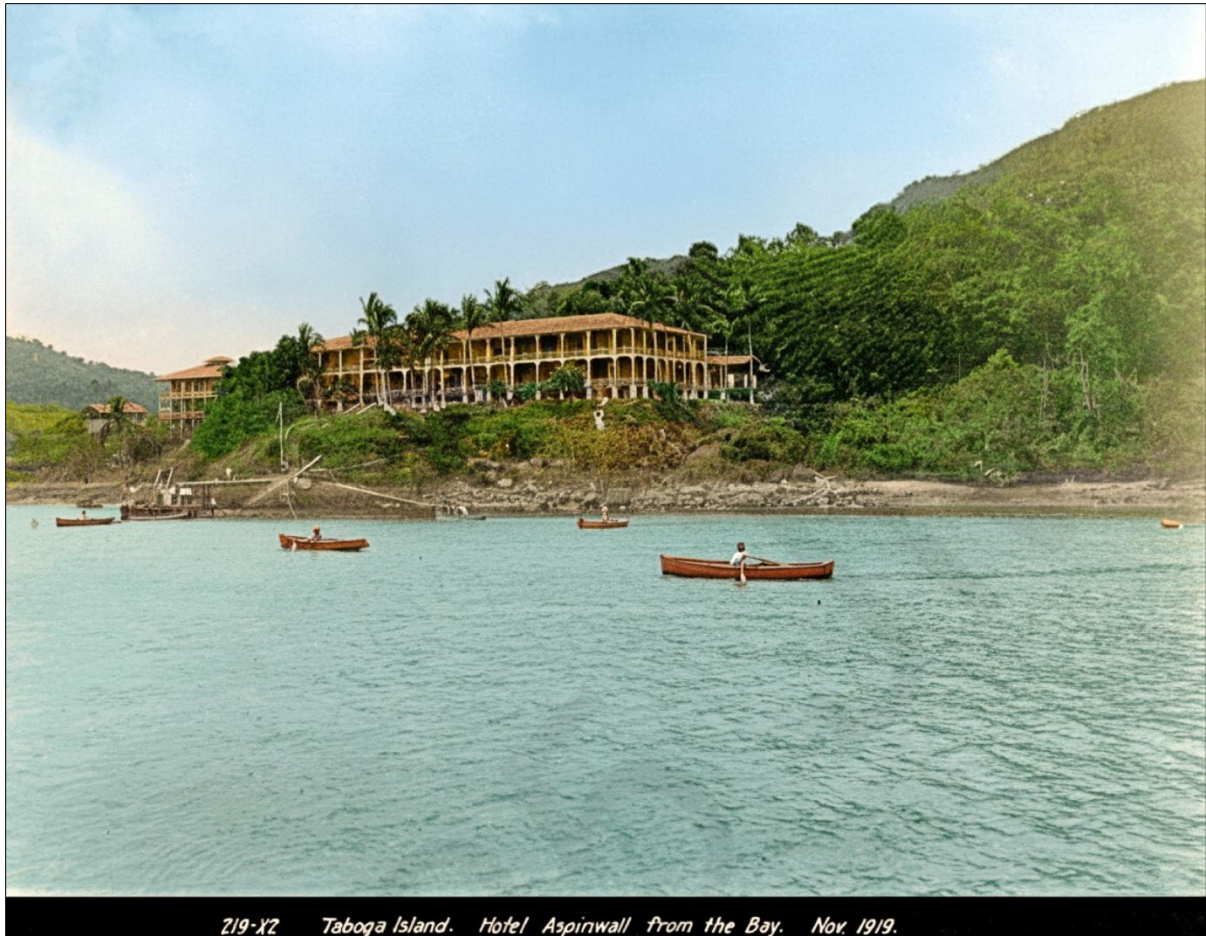
This exercises the bogy [something that causes fear in many people often without reason] of having to take a long and expensive trip to the United States or possibly suffer a complete breakdown through sticking to the job on account of unwillingness or inability to spend the money. Holiday picnic parties are also invited to make use of the grounds during the closed period. The caretaker in charge will have on hand a small stock of cigars and tobacco for sale to visitors. The Panama Canal launch service between Balboa and the island will be discontinued, but at present there is a launch making the round voyage from Panama every day. The Port Captain at Balboa can furnish launches for trips to the island. The closing down of the hotel at this time is due to the continued loss through its operation. The average number of people staying there has been less than four a day during the past month, and the loss per year has been about \$4,000.²⁹

²⁹ Ibid.



The falling off in patronage of the hotel is accounted for by the increased facilities for recreation which have developed during the past year, especially around Balboa and Panama. These include swimming at the several beaches, baseball games, prize fights, boating, fishing, automobiles and motorcycling, and other social amusements which have developed with the concentration of population towards the ends of the Canal Zone. The hotel at Taboga was established as a convalescent hospital in 1885 by the French, and when the Americans occupied the Canal Zone, the place was rehabilitated and placed in operation as a sanitarium, under the management of the Department of Sanitation. This continued until January 16, 1914, when it was turned over to the Subsistence Department for operation as a hotel.³⁰

³⁰ Ibid.



The Supply Department will reopen the Hotel Aspinwall at Taboga Island on January 1, 1917. The hotel was closed on June 30, 1916, at which time it was the intention to reopen it on February 1 for the period during which most employees will spend their annual leave. It has been decided to open on January 1, and run until May 1 or possibly later, depending on the patronage. Transportation between Balboa and Taboga will be afforded by the use of the launch Taboga, which makes the trip one way in an hour. The bus that leaves the Hotel Tivoli at 8.45 a.m. will connect at Balboa Heights station with the 9.05 train from Colon and run as far as the new oil house, which is three minutes' walk from Dock 19. On the return trip of the launch from the Hotel Aspinwall on Sunday nights and holiday nights, there will be a bus to meet the boat at Dock 19, running as far as the Hotel Tivoli.³¹

³¹ The Panama Canal. (1916, December 20). Hotel Aspinwall to Open on January 1. *The Panama Canal Record*, X, pp. 194-195.



Anyone wishing to make reservation for the opening date should write to the Assistant Chief Quartermaster, Balboa Heights; after the hotel is opened letters should be addressed to the Manager of the Hotel Aspinwall, Balboa. C. Z. The rates at Aspinwall have not risen. For Government employees and adult members of their families the charge for room and board is \$2 per day; for a stay of 14 days or over. \$1.75 per day. For non-employees the rate is \$2.50 per day; after a stay of 30 days a rate of \$2 per day will be given. For children under 12 years of age, and servants, both of employees and nonemployees, the rate is \$1 per day, flat. For single meals, without room, the rates for employees and non-employees are the same: Breakfast, 50 cents; luncheon or dinner, 75 cents. Rates for the launch trip, one way, are 30 cents for employees and adult members of their families, 20 cents for their children between 6 and 12 years of age. For non-employees the launch fares are double those for employees.³²

³² Ibid.



The Aspinwall Hotel on Taboga Island was closed in the afternoon of April 11 and all the patrons and hotel employees returned to the mainland. On the following day the hotel and grounds were placed in service as a concentration camp for German citizens interned on the Isthmus. The launch service between Balboa and the island has been discontinued.³³ A tide-recording station has been established on Morro Island, off the north side of Taboga Island, near the village of Taboga, by the Section of Meteorology and Hydrography. The apparatus is mounted on a pier built by the Pacific Steam Navigation Company in connection with its machine shop on Morro Island. The records taken so far indicate a slightly smaller variation in the tide range than at Balboa, with high and low tides occurring about five minutes in advance of the corresponding elevations at Balboa.³⁴

³³ The Panama Canal. (1917, April 18). Hotel Aspinwall Closed. *The Panama Canal Record*, X, p. 428.

³⁴ The Panama Canal. (1917, July 4). Tide-recording Station at Taboga. *The Panama Canal Record*, X, p. 545.



The Tabogans are a peaceful, happy race, yet one fully capable of giving good account of itself, when necessary, as has been proved in several instances. In 1870 a hundred or more-armed marines, under the influence of alcohol, came to the Island from a European man-o-war and tried to take advantage of the inhabitants. The Alcalde, Manuel A. Fuentes, with only a club as a weapon and a few followers to aid him, fought this group of infuriated marines. He lost his life in the fray. The villagers, armed with clubs and stones, continued the attack on the invaders who, being unable to withstand the onslaught, were compelled to flee to their ship carrying their wounded with them. On several occasions sailors from other nations have started disturbances on the Island but the inhabitants have shown their valor by compelling the respect of the rowdy element. The Islanders are followers of the sea for they are thoroughly at home in the waters of Panama.³⁵

³⁵ Reynolds, René (1929), *Taboga: The Isle of Enchantment*, Panamá, pp. 3-4.



Carnival begins the Saturday before Shrove Tuesday and ends at midnight on Tuesday. Before the City of Panama began to celebrate this event with pomp and enthusiasm the carnivals in Taboga were considered to be among the most attractive and amusing in the Republic. Even now the Island attracts many visitors for this merry ceremony. The Christmas celebration is also worthy of a special visit. Only during this season does the church allow its statues to be taken out for the procession. Because of the fact that there is not an automobile or passenger vehicle on the Island all sightseeing must be done leisurely. Strolling along with an understanding heart the history, romance, and mystery will whisper their secrets to you from the picturesque homes whose old Spanish tile roofs extend to the very edge of the cobble stone streets; the old church built by the Spaniards over four hundred years ago; the cemetery housing its dead in sunken resting places or in the walls, many whose names are traced nowhere save on the old worn markers.³⁶

³⁶ Reynolds, Op. cit., p. 8.



A dinner dance will be given by the management of the Hotel Aspinwall, Taboga Island, on Saturday night, October 9. Coffee and cake and lemonade will be served to the dancers for 25 cents. The tug Coco Solo will make an extra trip for the benefit of those who may desire to return home the same night, leaving Taboga at 11 p.m. Desirable rooms are, however, available for weekend visitors. The regular launch will leave Balboa at 5 p.m. on Saturday instead of 4:30, on account of the dance.³⁷

The Supply Department announces its intention of conducting an excursion to the Pearl Islands, from Balboa, via Taboga, on Sunday, October 24, using the steamship Favorite. Tickets will be sold for \$5 each, through the Canal restaurants, Details will be published later.³⁸

³⁷ The Panama Canal. (1920, October 6). Dinner Dance at the Aspinwall. *The Panama Canal Record*, XIV, p. 114.

³⁸ The Panama Canal. (1920, October 13). Excursion to Pearl Islands. *The Panama Canal Record*, XIV, p. 119.



219 X⁹ Taboga Island, The village from the Bay. January 21, 1921.

The Hotel Aspinwall, on Taboga Island, which was closed on July 1 on account of not being self-sustaining, has been leased for 3 years beginning September 1, and will be reopened on or about that date. The lessee is Mr. James A. Malloy, at present manager of the Strangers Club, in Colon. The Panama Canal has sought to retain the hotel in operation as a recreational resort for its employees. This has been provided in paragraphs 4 and 5 of the conditions of lease, which stipulate a 20 per cent reduction in rates for Canal, Panama Railroad, and Army and Navy employees, and that the hotel be operated in accordance with the sanitary regulations in effect in the Canal Zone and "in a manner to attract the patronage of employees of the Canal and the military organizations previously referred to."³⁹

³⁹ The Panama Canal. (1921, August 24). Reopening of the Hotel Aspinwall, Taboga. *The Panama Canal Record*, XV, p. 19.



But as the schedules of these little ships are never twice alike, and as the agents in Panama seldom can tell what they will be in advance, it is a wise plan to take passage from the capital. Passing close to Taboga, and in the lee of the shore, the sail across the Bay of Panama is smooth and pleasant until Punta Mala is reached. Here it is almost always rough, and one realizes, as the tiny steamer is tossed and buffeted about and creaks and protests in every joint, why the cape was given its suggestive name of 'Bad Point.' But the rough water is of short duration and beyond the cape the sea is again tranquil with numerous islands looming upon the horizon ahead. Many of these are large and heavily wooded, the largest being Coiba, nearly fifty miles in length and now the site of the Republic's penal colony and a regular point of call for the coastwise steamers.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Hyatt, V. A. (1922). *Panama Past and Present*. New York.



On the morning of June 5, a fire broke out in a storeroom adjoining the annex to the Hotel Aspinwall on Taboga Island. The storeroom, the annex and several small outhouses were completely destroyed, but the main building was saved. The water supply on Taboga Island is always limited and was unusually low at the time of this fire, as the rainfall since the termination of the last dry season has been too light to fill the storage tanks. Mainly for this reason the efforts of the manager and employees of the hotel and the inhabitants of the village to extinguish the blaze were ineffective. Men from the U. S. S. Galveston, anchored off Taboguilla Island, arrived on the scene and formed a bucket brigade in time to prevent the spread of the fire to the main building. They were followed by firemen from the Balboa Station in the launch Cone and by the tugs Cocoli and Gorgona. A party of firemen from Panama was also rushed to the island and rendered valuable assistance.⁴¹

⁴¹ The Panama Canal. (1923, June 6). Fire at Hotel Aspinwall, Taboga Island. *The Panama Canal Record*, XVI, p. 570.



219-Xth Taboga Island - The Village, Feb. 22, 1925

There are no well-defined streets owing to the irregular condition of the land. Due to the fact that the land is broken and stony the rain quickly cleanses and purifies. The main street has recently been given a concrete surface. This is actually the main walk and extends from the Aspinwall Hotel to the church. Besides being lighted with electricity, the town also has a water system, No longer are the old-fashioned lamps and lanterns used except in homes where the old Spanish customs yet prevail. The regular launch service, mail, phone and telegraph, as well as the wireless station of the U.S. Government tend to bring the Island in direct contact with the mainland but at the same time the Island retains its charm and restfulness. A few native souvenirs and trinkets can be purchased. Here, as in most towns, Chinamen are the principal shop keepers. The wares for sale vary so much that one of the tourists aptly wrote "from a pin to piano can be purchased in the shops".⁴²

⁴² Reynolds, Op. cit., p. 9.



The hotel serves delicious foods for Taboga is noted for its pineapples, its large juicy mangoes, papayas and native vegetables. The water supply is so sweet and pure that in olden times the ships took on a full supply when leaving here. When returning, six months later, it was found that the water remaining in the kegs was still sweet and clear. The agreeable temperature of the Island and its continuous cool breeze attract many folks from the mainland who spend their weekends here. Many of the Panamanians have homes in Taboga so that they can steal away over the weekend to enjoy the wonderful swimming and peace of the village. The flowers with their glorious coloring and exquisite fragrance lend enchantment to Taboga. In strolling along the quaint, narrow cobble streets one sees many "States" flowers blooming among the gorgeous tropical plants.⁴³

⁴³ Reynolds, Op. cit., p. 5.



Chagres Society Outing - Taboga, May 11, 1930
 Top row: W.H. Bolen, 1907; D.F. Donahue, 1904; A.F. Sickler, 1906; Jack Moehan, 1904.
 Second row: H.E. Westcott, 1906; W.S. Perry, 1905; Gerald Bliss, 1905; Howard Baxter, 1906; W.F. Morrison, 1906.
 Third row: F.L. Sala, 1908; C.M. Luyfer, 1905; C.O. Carlson, 1905; W.H. Wilmer, 1906; William Barney, 1906; R.H. Draughn, 1907.
 Bottom row: Thomas I. Grimson, 1907; R.M. Davies, 1906; F.H. Shebley, 1896; George H. Watts, 1905; E. Hallen, 1906;
 W.E. Murtogh, 1905; J.F. Kirby, 1905



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